Riceville is a very small community located in Johnson County. As are most small communities in this area, Riceville is situated in a valley between the hills. The climate is much like the rest of Eastern Kentucky, except in the winter the snow isn't as deep as it is in the higher altitudes. The resources of Riceville include oil, gas and coal. In the past much oil and gas was piped out of Riceville to the surrounding area. Most of the gas is now gone and only supplies local families with heat in the winter and gas for their cook stoves. Oil is still being piped out of this area to stations owned by Ashland Oil. The coal that is left in this area that could be mined easily is very small, although some of it is being stripped by a local mine operator. The good coal was deepmined out years ago.

Riceville has no real relations with other parts of the county except for the coal and oil that is took from this area and sent to other places. People from Riceville go to Paintsville, Salyersville and Prestonsburg mainly to buy their clothes and other goods.

The layout of Riceville follows the railroad from the main blacktop road (Route 825) for about 3 miles. There are really
two main forks of Riceville, Narrows Fork and Long Fork. If you follow Narrows Fork you can come out at Royalton, near Salyersville. If you cross the hill at the head of Long Fork you end up at Bonanza in Floyd County.

All the families in Riceville put a garden out for their potatoes, corn, tomatoes and any other crop they want to raise. There is not much tobacco raised in Riceville. Four families have a tobacco base.

Riceville was started around 1917 as a timber and coal town. Probably the first building in Riceville was a hotel for the railroad that ran to Riceville, which was the head of the track then. The railroad is now owned by Chesapeake & Ohio Railway Company. In 1917 it was owned by the Dawkins Lumber Company, which had a lumber mill here. In those days Riceville was a fairly large town. This was where the coal and timber from the area was brought to so it could be shipped out. There was even a regular passenger train. Riceville started dying out when the Dawkins Lumber Company acquired a new stand of timber in Bréthitt County. The sawmill was moved there and the railroad was extended on up through the mountains; thus a lot of the people followed the company to its new location for the jobs it provided, so started the decline of Riceville. There are no famous residents of Riceville. Factors affecting growth would be the railroad, since it was the cause for Riceville's founding, and the cause for its decline.
According to my personal census of Riceville the population totals 90 people. If there is any density of population it would be around the local store, but mainly the houses are just strung out along side the railroad.

The age distribution in Riceville is about equally divided between the young and old. The average age for someone here would be between 35 and 45. Slightly less that 50% of the population is male. The race of the people is confined to caucasian and the ethnic background of most of the people would be Irish-American.

The occupations of the people here consist of any job they can find. Many are miners. The education level of the older people is low as is most small communities. An eight grade education would be the level of most of the people.

The economy of the community has improved greatly in the past years. Up to about 5 years ago the only jobs available here was in the coal industry. Now some of the people are employed at American Standard, others are carpenters in business for themselves. Ninety per-cent of the working force is employed. The ones not working are just loafing around and not really interested in finding a steady job, just an oddjob somewhere to make a couple of dollars to buy beer with.

There is no tax support for the community, and no services are provided for the residents. As far as the local mines go there is no union; so there is no trouble over labor. If your boss doesn't like your work he can fire you.
The families in Riceville work together very closely in the Community Development Club to keep the community clean. Recently a lot of the people gathered all the trash beside the roads and around their house and put it out beside the road to be picked up by the state highway trucks in the county wide clean-up drive. One of the projects that the club voted to undertake was the construction of a playground area in Riceville. A local man donated the use of his bulldozer and another granted the use of a piece of his land. Dating follows about the same patterns that it does around any other small community; you go to town and just loaf around or you can go to the drive-in. Marriages are usually small affairs at the home of the bride or groom.

The housing in Riceville is very good. All the houses on the main road are painted nicely; lawns are kept clean and mowed. All the families except 2 own the property that their houses are built on.

The only government in the community would be the magistrate in the district. When you get a ticket you have to go see the magistrate usually, depending on where you get caught. If there is a power structure in the community it would be the store owner. His is the only store in the community so if you need groceries and don't have time to go to town you buy them there. The attitude of the people toward the government (magistrate) is good. He is no stranger to the people; most families have known him for years. Everybody trusts him and think he is fair.
There is no school system in the community now. Up to 1964 there was 2 one-room schools in the community. One was located at Long Fork and one at Riceville. In 1964 the one at Long Fork was closed and the students went to Jennys Creek Elementary School. In 1966 the school at Riceville was closed also. All the people in the community were happy when these schools were closed. At present the grade school kids go to Oil Springs Grade School and the high school kids to Johnson Central High School. The people of Riceville are very proud of Johnson Central. Many of them attend the basketball and the football games. They feel like a part of the school.

There are 2 churches in Riceville, a Freewill Baptist and a United Baptist. Most of the people are members of the Freewill Baptist. The only church organization is the one which keep the church up. Presently the Freewill Baptist church is scheduled to be remodeled. So few people attend the United Baptist church that they couldn't get the money to fix their church if they wanted to. The attendance averages about 8-12. The people around here respect the churches; they don't knock your religion.

There are no recreation facilities in the community, although a playground is supposed to be constructed for the children.

The only public transportation is the passenger bus that runs to Paintsville twice a week. Up until about one year ago it ran every day until they started losing too much money on the run.
The only public utilities are electric and the telephone.

A water line is being laid to Oil Springs so in a few years it may eventually get to Riceville. Library service is provided by the Johnson County Library bookmobile.

The only social problems the people could think of was the amount of drinking that goes on and bootlegging, although there is no bootlegger that sells right in Riceville. On about any night of the week and all weekend you can see a carload of boys sitting off the road somewhere drinking and playing the guitar. Although they are not bothering anyone the people still complain.

I think that the future of Riceville is very good. As more industries come into the area more of the people that moved out years ago will be coming back here to get jobs. Already a few have returned for employment at American Standard.